



Grotesque in C. Dickens

Max Vega-Ritter

► To cite this version:

| Max Vega-Ritter. Grotesque in C. Dickens. 2016. hal-01344374

HAL Id: hal-01344374

<https://hal.uca.fr/hal-01344374>

Preprint submitted on 11 Jul 2016

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial| 4.0 International License

Max Vega-Ritter.

Grotesque in C. Dickens

Introduction grotesque

“Real and apparent contradictions abound in discussions of the grotesque; it is an extremely flexible category”, as Geoffrey Galt Harpham reminds us (Harpham article 464). Whoever reads into the bulk of criticism attached to the grotesque will see instability as the first striking characteristic of a concept that Baudelaire called “this indefinable element of beauty [...] that obscure and mysterious element” (Baudelaire 132). The purpose of this brief introduction is not to provide an exhaustive survey of the many nuances found in the exegesis of the grotesque, which would necessitate to foray deep into historical, architectural, aesthetic and literary approaches, but to sketch in the theories deemed essential to a correct assessment of the prominence and meaning of the grotesque in the European fiction of the 19th century. The works of 20th-century literary critics like Kayser, Bakhtin and Harpham (taken together perhaps) provide a reasonably clear insight into the fundamentally ambivalent concept. The grotesque was theorized in the 19th century notably by Hugo, Ruskin and Baudelaire, who shed light on the significance of grotesque within Romanticism and Victorian realism.

The grotesque famously borrows its name from the accident of the discovery around 1480 of the remains of Nero’s *Domus Aurea* and its elaborate ornaments. Its meaning then gradually expanded from the designation of the decorative grotesque of the Renaissance to what may appear as a vague or all-inclusive category. Critics generally agree, however, on the central idea that the grotesque realizes the either harmonious or hair-raising, but always impossible, fusion of heterogeneous elements. The word has come more prosaically to designate an unexpected mixture of comic and horror or of comic and disgust. Laughter is central - distortion, even carried out to extremities, is not grotesque without laughter. “For an object to be grotesque, it must arouse three responses. Laughter and astonishment are two; either disgust or horror is the third” (Harpham article 463). Harpham’s 1976 definition puts to the fore the essential idea that the grotesque originates in the subject of the gaze, that it isn’t inherent in the grotesque object. This, Baudelaire had underlined as early as 1855: “Indian and Chinese idols are unaware that they are ridiculous; it is in us, Christians, that their comicality resides.” (Baudelaire 142). And to grasp the impact of the viewer’s feeling of estrangement, his (at least initial) impossibility to make sense of the grotesque image, one must also remember that the grotesque emerges in a realistic context: “[The grotesque] threat depends for its effectiveness on the efficacy of the everyday, the partial fulfilment of our usual expectations. We must be believers whose faith has been profoundly shaken but not destroyed; otherwise we lose that fear of life and become resigned to absurdity, fantasy, or death” (Harpham 462).

As Virginia Swain reminds us, “the history of the grotesque is usually described as falling rather neatly unto two distinct moments. The trauma of the French Revolution [...] can be seen as a watershed between the two” (Swain, 3). “The early grotesque has a carefree, utopian flavour” (Swain, 3), whereas 19th-century grotesque becomes the expression of “the artist’s struggle to overcome feelings of ‘helplessness and horror’” (Swain, 4, quotes 2 words from Kayser). This historical distinction may be too “neat”¹, but it appealingly points to the traditional distinction between two modes of the grotesque: “the comic and the burlesque” on the one hand, “the abnormal and the horrible” on the other, to use Hugo’s terminology (Hugo 347). Each mode famously has its 20th-century champion: Mikhail Bakhtin and Wolfgang Kayser.

In 1957, starting from the observation that in the grotesque “the realm of inanimate things is no longer separated from those of plants, animals, and humans” (Kayser², 21), Wolfgang Kayser describes the grotesque as the inscription of familiar elements in a context in which they cease to be recognizable and become menacing. In emphatic terms Kayser describes the grotesque world as radically and frighteningly alien, “nocturnal and inhuman” (157), destroying our faith in our world, “instill[ing] fear of life rather than fear of death” (185), rendering us “unable to orient ourselves in the alienated world” (185). Grotesque art, a source of terror, is finally described as an “attempt to invoke and subdue the demonic aspects of the world” (188), though Kayser fails to clearly identify the “dark” or “ominous forces” (188) exorcised by grotesque art.

If Kayser insists so much on disharmony and alienation/ disorientation, it is, according to Bakhtin, because he is incapable of seeing the bigger picture, because he “offers the theory of the Romantic and modernist forms only” (Bakhtin, 46). In 1965 Bakhtin thus goes further back in time to argue that the grotesque is not a post-Renaissance category. He shows in his study of the popular sources of Rabelais’ fiction how ‘grotesque realism’, as he defines it in his introduction, is rooted in medieval carnival culture and fed by festive, universal and ambivalent laughter. Just as medieval carnivals stage political or social inversion through humorous parodies of serious rituals, grotesque realism is based on “degradation [...], the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract, [...] a transfer to the material level” (19). Such degradation is seen by folk culture in cyclical terms, i.e. as part of a movement of cyclical and universal regeneration celebrating “moments of death and revival, of change and renewal” (9). The emphasis of grotesque realism is placed on materiality and corporeality, “the body and the bodily life hav[ing] [...] a cosmic [...] character”

¹The Dance of Death, an important grotesque motif, dates back to long before the French Revolution, and seems to have little “carefree flavour”.

²Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* [1957], New-York: McGraw-Hill 1966.

(19). In folk culture, the grotesque body is “a principle of growth” (26), its “lower stratum” (21) a zone of sheer regenerative force.

Geoffrey Harpham’s 1982 comprehensive study of the grotesque concerns itself both with the *grottesche* of the Renaissance and more archaic grotesque forms like the *grotto-esque* or cave-art. His ground-breaking analysis sees beyond grotesque themes and styles to put to the fore the temporal dimension of the grotesque, which ignores temporal process to create “images of instantaneous process”, “narrative compressed into image” (mettre une note: see article, note 2). The grotesque ignores time.

[The 19th century]

As we will see now however, time does not ignore the grotesque: “Each age redefines the grotesque in terms of what threatens its sense of essential humanity.” (Harpham article 463). The diversity of the sub-genres and aesthetic categories which 19th-century grotesque fed on (like caricature, the macabre, drama or tragicomedy) bears witness to the century’s passion for the grotesque, not only as an aesthetic category but also as a mode of investigation of reality, a contribution to the questioning of society in 19th-century Europe, its raging conflicts and the shocks of scientific progress (note: Baudelaire, Hugo et articles).

[HUGO] French art-critic André Chastel explains that the hybridity of Renaissance grotesque, “the antithesis of representation” could only appeal to Romantic writers aspiring to creative freedom. (check ref with Rosen). In 1827, Victor Hugo’s *Preface to Cromwell* turns into a passionate defence of the grotesque as an artistic category: “And so, let addle-pated pedants [...] claim that the deformed, the ugly, the grotesque should never be imitated in art; one replies that the grotesque is comedy, and that comedy apparently makes a part of art” (Hugo, 356). For Hugo, the grotesque is a necessary ingredient of comedy, seen as a combination of the sublime and the grotesque, because the grotesque is an essential element of reality, of “all creation” (350): “everything in creation is not humanly *beautiful*, [...] the ugly exists beside the beautiful, the unshapely beside the graceful, the grotesque on the reverse of the sublime, evil with good, darkness with light.” (345).

If, for Hugo, the grotesque is the sign of man’s imperfect nature, of “the human beast” (350), it is not, as in Ruskin, a sign of man’s unfortunately imperfect vision, which if done away with would leave only the sublime. Hugo’s grotesque exists next to the sublime and is necessary to man’s apprehension of the sublime, as “a halting-place, a mean term, a starting-point whence one rises toward the beautiful with a fresher and keener perception” (349). Hugo may describe the grotesque as inferior to the beautiful or the sublime, it remains, from an artistic point of view, “the richest source that nature can offer art” (348).

[RUSKIN] In Part III of *Stones of Venice*, Ruskin “examine[s] into the nature and essence of the Grotesque” (Ruskin, 114) and establishes two

important distinctions. The first one is between “sportive” (or “playful”) grotesque and “terrible grotesque³”: “The grotesque is, in almost all cases, composed of two elements, one ludicrous, the other fearful; [...] as one or other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, sportive grotesque and terrible grotesque.” (§ XXIII, 127).

Both modes of the grotesque can be “noble” or “ignoble”, and that is the second distinction established by Ruskin. Ignoble grotesque is an illegitimate act of artistic creation, “work as false as it is monstrous, a mass of blunt malice and obscene ignorance” (§ 55). The inventive license provided by the grotesque is rejected by Ruskin, who proves indignant at the apparent pointlessness characteristic of Renaissance ornamental grotesque in which he can discern no moral or spiritual truths. *Ruskin thus logically sees Raphael’s work as “the fruit of [a] great [mind] degraded to base objects” (§49). For Ruskin, ornamentation must be “rational” (§50).*

His insistence on noble grotesque shows however that Ruskin has a positive vision of many forms of the grotesque. Even sportive grotesque, the product of “the minds of inferior workmen” (§ 32), can be noble as “the fruits of a rejoicing energy in uncultivated minds” (§ 34). Terrible grotesque, “this [...] more interesting branch of imaginative work” (137), rises out of fear, “the fear which arises out of the contemplation of great powers in destructive operation, and generally from the perception of the presence of death” (137, check). Fear of the divine is experienced by the producer of noble grotesque, and terrible grotesque, when noble, is therefore contiguous to the sublime. If Ruskin agrees with Hugo that grotesque art remains the sign of man’s imperfect vision and fallen nature, he doesn’t share Hugo’s conception of the grotesque as necessary to man’s perception of the sublime. For Ruskin, the grotesque is always an imperfect artistic expression susceptible, as “the mind of the workman becomes informed with better knowledge, and capable of more earnest exertion” (§51), of “pass[ing] into perfect sublime” (§51)

[BAUDELAIRE] In “The Essence of Laughter” (1856), like Hugo, Baudelaire has a deeply romantic approach of the grotesque⁴. Like Hugo and Ruskin, he too sees the grotesque as the sign of man’s fallen condition, since laughter is always the expression of “the Satanic in man” (137). One of the novelties brought by Baudelaire’s analysis is that he sees man’s fallen nature in religious, but also mythical terms. The grotesque is here also the primitive expression of an archaic past: “the laughter caused by the grotesque has about it something profound, primitive and axiomatic, [...] [close] to the innocent life and to absolute joy” (144). From that, Baudelaire distinguishes between absolute

³A distinction which up to a certain point corresponds to that established by Hugo (see *supra*).

⁴Baudelaire also expresses his love for European masters of the grotesque like Hogarth, Cruikshank or Goya in “Some Foreign Caricaturists” (DATE).

comic - the grotesque - and significative comic. “[Significative] comic is an imitation mixed with a certain creative faculty” (143), whereas the grotesque, that “intoxication of laughter [...] both terrible and irresistible” (148), is “a creation mixed with a certain imitative faculty— imitative, that is, of elements pre-existing in nature” (143), the expression of the superiority “of man over nature” (143).

The grotesque, Baudelaire seems to lament, is not produced by French artists because it does not correspond to French minds: “In France, the land of lucid thought and demonstration, where the natural and direct aim of art is utility, we generally find the significative type” (145-6). The grotesque is however a true European production “Germany, sunk in her dreams, will afford us excellent specimens of the absolute comic. There all is weighty, profound and excessive. To find true comic savagery, however, you have to cross the Channel and visit the foggy realms of spleen. Happy, noisy, carefree Italy abounds in the innocent variety. [...] The Spaniards [...] are quick to arrive at the cruel stage, and their most grotesque fantasies often contain a dark element” (146).

Dickens

It is time to visit “the foggy realms of spleen” and to say a few words about the grotesque of Dickens’s fiction⁵. If Dickens was wary of high romanticism (note: Juliet John), be it English or European, he famously wished to explore “the Romantic side of familiar things” (preface *Bleak House*) and there he found the grotesque. His “streaky bacon” conception of fiction, as expressed in *Oliver Twist* (note ref) has uncanny common points with Hugo’s definition of the Romantic drama: “[...] the romantic drama [...] would lead the audience constantly from sobriety to laughter, from mirthful excitement to heart-breaking emotion [...]. For the drama is the grotesque in conjunction with the sublime, the soul within the body; it is tragedy beneath comedy” (Hugo, 383). Apart from Hugo’s definition of drama, Dickens’s art strikes us in that it includes or offers examples of all the facets of the grotesque mentioned by theorists. Dickens’s grotesque is alternately delightful and violent, carefree and sinister. On the sunny side, and because “energy and joy are the father and mother of the grotesque⁶”, Dickens shares Baudelaire’s love of pantomime, and indulges in sheer farce. On the sombre side, he also shares Baudelaire’s fascination with the dislocation, incongruity or ugliness of human bodies and constantly displays his awareness of the corporeality of the grotesque. If Bakhtin saw the grotesque body as a source of regeneration but failed to perceive its horror, fragmentation and dismemberment are put to the fore by Dickens, in whose fiction the hybrid, fragmented grotesque body is obsessively represented,

⁵For a detailed and comprehensive analysis, see Michael Hollington, *Dickens and the Grotesque*, Totowa (New Jersey): Barnes & Noble, 1984.

⁶Chesterton on Browning, an epigram which perfectly corresponds to Dickens’s expenditure of sheer creative force through the grotesque. (ref in Harpham, page 8).

as a source of fascination, not untinged with repulsion or horror (Carker's teeth) and also as a source of fun (the leg).

As Steig has shown, Dickens's grotesque owes a great deal to his choice of perspective, from the combination of a child's and an adult's visions, the child-like vision bringing a deformity which serves the "expression [of] infantile fears", example of Uriah Heep. Not far from the primitive evoked by Baudelaire and analysed by Harpham. (ceci doit être soit développé et explicité, soit enlevé)

If Dickens's grotesque is rooted in the exploration of "the romantic side of familiar things", it also serves the depiction of a new reality, bearing witness to Dickens's conviction that in the wake of the disruptions brought about by the advent of an industrial society, "'real life' is more grotesque and fantastical than anything the artistic imagination can produce". The incongruous distortion which characterizes the grotesque becomes an essential element of Dickens's faithful representation of reality, and the contradiction is only apparent. As Harpham reminds us, "by the end of the nineteenth century, it was more common than not to speak of the "naturalness" of the grotesque" (Harpham, preface à édition 2006, xxv). The grotesque is no longer pure fantasy but serves for example to denounce the devastation brought about by the industrial revolution (example: *OCS*: the industrial landscape and its "writhing" machines – find ref). In Dickens's fiction, 19th century reality becomes "grotesque and wild but not impossible" (preface of *The Old Curiosity Shop*)⁸.

The Grotesque as a symptom of madness and its cure Grotesque and the Freudian Phantasm

Many of the writers this study focuses on, as well as Charles Dickens's own use of the grotesque often consist in tying together a cluster of polar opposites, oxymorons, in the form of contradictory images, similes or metaphors or character traits. A characteristic instance of such oxymorons is (see Victor Sage's comment on their comicality [1](#)) Venus's taxidermist shop in *Our Mutual Friend*. It exhibits Silas Wegg's own leg bone with which Silas so closely identifies he strongly objects to its being sold and thereby « dispersed » by Venus for « he wants to collect himself like a genteel person » (Book 1 ch.7). Venus selling it would be felt by Wegg like an amputation/castration of himself, of his own power and identity.

At Silas Wegg's departure, the whole taxidermist shop is said to be « paralytically animated »-- a comic oxymoron aptly descriptive not only of Wegg's personality in the novel but more fundamentally, of the main hero's situation and conduct. John Harmon is symbolically or imaginarily in fetters, "paralysed", as a result of his father's attitude and his will codicil— inheriting his father's fortune is conditioned to marrying Bella Wilfer. John Harmon, being caught in the double bind set by his father: --either marry a girl for mercenary reasons or lose his father's huge

⁷Michael Hollington, Preface to *Dickens and the Grotesque*, p.2

⁸On this, see Nathalie Vanfasse's article REF

fortune--is obliged to take refuge under an assumed identity. The false name is at once a subterfuge, an evasion and a constraint. It is an imposture John Harmon/Roskesmith/Julius Handford labours under humiliatingly but will doggedly carry on with for most of the novel. He even seems to find it hard to shed it off, for he marries Bella under his false name—a circumstance he even hides from her until after the birth of his first child. John Harmon's unexpected violent fit of anger at Wegg seems to be indicative of a resemblance, as if Webb were John Harmon's despised and grotesque double, carrying the latter's denied resentment, sense of frustration and impotence to extremes. He can be viewed as Harmon's dark, socially inferior double in many ways, and both being united in being the living embodiment of a castration phantasm lurking in the depths of the text.

In fact, such binary opposites are very similar or actually akin to a Freudian « Phantasm »²-- an unconscious scenario representing a deep-seated emotional conflict... It is said by Freud to play an important role in bridging instinctual life and thought, or wishes and purposes. Characteristically, moreover, grotesque writers often exacerbate one of the binary opposites and push it to an extremity. Martin Chuzzlewit is first a shrewd suspicious old man; eventually a senile dotard who suddenly drops his mask, tearing off Pecksniff's, exposing his hypocritically humble avidity. Paul Dombey is a firm owner whose thirst for power and domination brings about his own son's death. Paradoxically he tries to turn his son into an extension or a reflection of his own power. Little Paul dies as if he was drawn to death by a secret attraction to passiveness. He prefigures Dombey's own final collapse into helpless powerlessness. Nicodemus Boffin in *Our Mutual Friend* is successively the epitome of generosity and of miserliness, holding under his thumb his former boss's son, humiliating him all the more ruthlessly in proportion to his former kindness to him. The enigma of *Edwin Drood* mainly lies in Jasper, the loving-dearly loved uncle who is presented as suspect of murdering his own nephew... the more loving he looks the more heavily suspicions lie on him.

The Monster and the Norm

In many ways the monster and its monstrosity stem from norm- itself – as if the latter gave rise to its opposite underside --family love and intra family links being undermined and fatefully destroyed by terrible undercurrents of hatred and anger. Hortense, Lady Dedlock's dedicated chambermaid, in *Bleak House* hates her mistress out of sheer jealousy and wounded pride. She murders Tulkinghorn, Lord Dedlock's private attorney-at-law, as if she identified with Lady Dedlock as a victim of his relentless pursuit of the secret she is trying to hide from the world. Tulkinghorn is the incarnation of Law as a punitive Power, the pitiless upholder of a cold law or norm. Hortense's cold destructiveness is the sheer reflection of Tulkinghorn's own ruthlessness.

Charles Dickens exposes the cruelty of Law or the Norm as it was being built up by Victorian society and turns against it the very violence they bore within just as storm clouds carry thunder in their own depths... Charles Dickens is just as ferocious in his exposures as Victorian superegos could be in repressing emotional and sexual drives and urges. Nevertheless, he could be just as watchful and mistrustful of the latter and did not endorse nor advocate revolutionary uprisings, though he could sympathise with the deep sufferings in which popular uprisings originated. He clung to Order and Norms just as desperately as he lashed at their sadistic edge...

The meaning of Social Superegos

For a long time, in his fictional work until *David Copperfield*³, Charles Dickens seems to have held on to the hope that some sort of kindly powerful figure might rise and extend its rightful loving rule over the world in the end. He may have been helped and confirmed in that belief by a strong defensive love attitude against guilty/aggressive identification/fixation to women. Little Em'ly, Dora and Agnes are

telling examples of how David/Dickens could focus on a woman, let himself be enthralled to her while making her suffer keenly and silently by erecting himself as her stern almost lethal master. Unlike in *Oliver Twist* where Rose Mailie nearly dies, or Cathy in *Nicholas Nickleby* or Little Nell in *Old Curiosity Shop* or Dora in *David Copperfield* who actually die, gradually Charles Dickens's women will no longer as a rule come to their end, despite sometimes deep suffering.

Feminine Grotesques

There is a large collection of feminine grotesques in Charles Dickens fiction. They exhibit strong propensities to conventionally masculine attitudes. From Mrs. Mann in *Oliver Twist* to Mrs. Clennam in *Little Dorrit* or Mme Farge in *ATOTC* many women have nothing gentle about them. They show more ruthless determination than most men in Charles Dickens's. Fictional world. Here the feminine pole in them is reduced to very little whereas the masculine one grows to be overpowering. *Our Mutual Friend* marks a dramatic turning in this regard, with the grotesque sublimity of Betty Higden. Betty Higden is one of the very finest women characters in all CD's fiction, one of the most dickensian, too. Her grotesque sublimity - if these two most antagonistic words could ever be coupled together as they have been by CD's creation--has no like in all Dickens 's fiction. She is as generous as Aunt Betsey and even more if that were possible, since she dies in order to free Slopper from all ties to her that could fetter him in his progress to adulthood. She is more preposterous and eccentric than Betsey because of the utter desperate social destitution she lives in. One hardly, imagines a finer recognition of woman's capacity for love. for understanding, for courage and determination in the teeth of hostile human circumstances. She is sublime and grotesque. Just as Sloppy is grotesque, too, his howls and bellows along with his huge capital of legs and knees and elbows and his innumerable buttons make him a grotesque creature in which crude physical reality materializes into absurd or senseless shape.--yet, like Mr. Dick in DC. He is both insane and sensible, thereby demonstrating that madness can be close to wisdom and generosity.

CD's deepest insight-- the same could be said of Victor Hugo's monsters-- perhaps lies therein: sublimity can be found-- is often to be found-- beneath the most unlikely, most unprepossessing or insane appearances and clothings. grotesque – i.e. being preposterous and repellent-- creatures can be sublime. Positive Sublimity which is Truth and Beauty is visibly present in them

Grotesque is a weapon, a means to expose and lash at, greed, hypocrisy, ruthless power, overtowering pride by highlighting their excess and preposterousness. Yet it can hardly be denied that it also arises from more specific or perhaps deeper more ambivalent sources : indignant anger at the wrong of the great institutions that make up the fabric of Victorian or Nineteenth Century society : law and justice, the power of money, class hierarchy and domination, poor school education..

An enigmatic meaning of Grotesque

More generally speaking, as the reader will notice when reading the ensuing chapters, most grotesque characters give probably; too, body to an insight into undercurrents of violent irrationality, excess and death urges, coming into sight in the shape of violently transgress gestures or contradictory signals. Yet, one should not be mistaken: repressed unlawful or potentially lawful urges are intrinsic to grotesque, giving it an enigmatic edge, an inscrutable dimension and an almost intractable or rebellious energy. The grotesque monster figures what law and norms cannot subdue, curb nor tame into « civilized » creatures. That is the very mystery Victor Hugo, Charles Baudelaire, Gerard de Nerval, Nicholas Gogol were fascinatingly drawn to and sought to grapple with or tellingly gave expression to.

As Michael Hollington explains in the introduction to his 1984 book, “to think of Dickens in relation to the grotesque is almost inevitably to stray freely and frequently across national boundaries” (p.7). This book therefore proposes to address Dickens’s use of this complex aesthetic category in relation with other 19th-century European writers of the grotesque. Intertextuality and comparative or cultural analysis are used here to shed new light on Dickens’s influences (given and received) as well as to compare and contrast his use of the aesthetic category with that of other key European writers of the grotesque like Hugo and Baudelaire, but also Nikolai Gogol, Thomas Hardy and a few others.

The first section is centred on the first half of the century and looks at the fundamental texts, techniques and experiences which shaped Dickens’s conception of the grotesque. French specialist of the literary grotesque Dominique Peyrache-Leborgne⁹ notably insists on the visual dimension of the grotesque and on the technical developments of the early 19th century which made possible the emergence of the ‘iconotext’, the grotesque combination of text and image. COMPLETE

The second section explores the grotesque as a strategy of representation of 19th-century reality. This section focuses on the grotesque as verbalizing and controlling change, as yoking together antagonistic emotional, social and even political drives and aspirations. Key 19th-century grotesque motifs are here considered such as the birth of the modern metropolis. COMPLETE

The third section explores darker facets of the Romantic and Victorian grotesque, the grotesque as an expression of resistance to change. The analysis ranges from the difficult confrontation with scientific discoveries – mainly Darwin’s theory of evolution - to the question of gender and the social resistance conveyed in the depiction of either femininity or masculinity as grotesque. As a conclusion to this overview the last chapter considers the renewed interest in the grotesque - this distinctive feature of Dickens’s work - in today’s adaptations of the novels of the canon.

¹See further: Victor Sage (University of East Anglia) « Arts of Dismemberment, Anatomy, Articulation, and the grotesque body in Our Mutual Friend » Ch.11

²The language of psycho-analysis J.Laplanche JB Pontalis Karnac Books, 1973

⁹Author of *Grotesques et arabesques dans le récit romantique. De Jean Paul à Victor Hugo*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2012.

Amy thesis « Les structures imaginaires et leurs conflits dans les romans de Charles Dickens and WM Thackeray des *Pickwick Papers* à *David Copperfield* et de *Barry lyndoL* à *Henry Esmond*. Unpublished..1986 Université de Montpellier 3